Impact of Packaging Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) on Consumer Buying Behaviour- A Review of Literature

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Abstract

The stiff competition in business environment today requires marketers to fully understand the factors that influence consumer behaviour. Packaging is one of the important factors influencing consumer buying decisions and encompasses almost every product category- from FMCG, food and beverages to pharmaceuticals and personal care. It is now crucial to understand more about the packaging attributes that best influences the consumer and to also understand more about how consumers perceive and respond to changes in product packaging. This paper is aimed at examining the impact of packaging on consumer buying behaviour while purchasing FMCG products. The paper relies heavily on textbooks, magazines, newspapers, journals, internet and other relevant materials as sources of data. Based on the extant literature it was found that packaging elements represent a good means of marketing communications and helps to attract the consumers’ attention. The paper also recommends that retailers and marketers should invest on research to understand the packaging attributes that their consumers would be more interested in so as to meet their preference.
**Introduction**

Successful marketing begins with the understanding of why and how consumers behave. Consumer buying behavior is the area of interest for all marketers. It involves thoughts and feelings that shoppers experience and the actions they perform in the buying process (Wambugu, 2015). The behavior of consumers is usually influenced by factors such as social, psychological, cultural and personal factors and an understanding of their impact is essential as marketing mix strategies can be developed to appeal to the preferences of the target market (Rani, 2014). Consumers today can choose from an ever-increasing number of products because there are too many products seen by the consumers, whereas the too-brief session allows no time for them to examine the products individually; thus, the competition among producers to attract consumers’ attention has grown fiercer (Esmaeilpour & Rajabi, 2018). The competition encourages the need for market differentiation and the need to stand out in the competition. Accordingly, companies are obliged to differentiate their products with those of their competitors’ through, among others, packaging and branding (Cahyoroni & Rusfian, 2011). Consumer behaviour is however not static, it is constantly changing as the purchasing attributes of the consumer change overtime because of the consumer’s physical, psychological, geographical, or demographic needs (Kosgei, 2018). Packaging is an integral part of modern business and an essential marketing mix that projects firm’s brand image. It is essentially designed to convey the image of high quality of a company’s product (Ulrich, Campana & Malkewitz, 2010; Chukwu & Enudu, 2018). It is necessary for producers to understand thinking and reactions of consumers towards packaging (Ahmad & Kanwal, 2021). Similarly, it is also important that most marketers believe it is the fifth ‘P’ of marketing mix with other four Ps of product, price, promotion and place and it is considered to be an important element.

**Keywords:** Packaging, FMCG, Consumer Buying Behaviour
in product strategy (Kotler, 2008; Adam & Ali, 2014). Every business activity requires constant changes and improvements so as to healthily compete and fulfill the expectations of consumers. Thus package performs an important role in marketing communication and could be treated as one of the most important factors influencing consumers buying decisions.

Selection of the right and appropriate packaging material, especially for foods directly consumed can be tough for marketers, even with the huge variety of choices available these days (Sarpong, 2014). Deciding on the mode and type of packaging with many factors in mind (safety, functionality, sustainability, transparency, and shelf appeal) is a challenge to manufacturers. Properties of packaging materials such as strength, flexibility, safety, transparency and gas permeability determine whether packaging is suitable for a particular product or not (Sarpong, 2014). Lately, food packaging has gained a widespread importance in food safety due to the possibility of migration of chemicals from food contact materials (Icoz & Eker, 2016). Migration is an important factor affecting the quality and shelf life of food, which may also affect human health.

The term migration is used to describe the process of mass transfer from a food packaging material to its content (Arvatoyannis & Bosnea, 2004; Bhunia et al, 2013). Occasionally, the interactions between the container and food entail a loss of quality, as well as the migration of toxic substances into the food caused by the use of inappropriate materials.

Moreover, environmental-friendly character of packaging has become an issue that consumers are relying on to make product choice decisions (Garsen, 2000; Annan, 2018). Environmentally friendly (also eco-friendly, nature friendly, and green) are synonyms used to refer to goods and services, laws, guidelines and policies considered to inflict minimal or no harm on the environment. In recent years, by awareness of environmental benefits, moving from disposable packaging to recyclable and reusable packaging has increased. The menace of littering and the indiscriminate disposal of the packaging waste in various undesired sites pose a lot of threat to the environment (Odunze et al, 2008; USAID, 2009; Hussaini, 2011, Olalere, Kehinde & Matthew, 2015). When highly involved in environmental issues, a consumer gains more environmental consciousness, which leads to a positive attitude for those environmentally sound brand.
Research has revealed that packaging is an important factor as it influences consumer buying decisions (Sarp, 2014). Although packaging performs an important role in marketing communications and could be treated as one of the most important factors influencing consumers, the significance of its elements and the level of their influence on consumers’ buying behavior are still relevant controversial issues for discussion among scholars (Okeke & Amobi, 2020). Several studies have been conducted on the impact of product packaging on consumer buying behaviour in different sectors and locations. Some researchers focus on all elements of packaging and their impact on consumer buying behaviour: Ndulue (2020), Kesavan et al. (2020), while others concentrate on separate elements of packaging and their impact on consumer buying behaviour: Okeke and Amobi (2020), Ahmad and Kanwal (2021). Okeke and Amobi (2020) posit that printed information, material, colour and graphics remain significant predictor of consumer purchase decision for beauty care cosmetics in Awka. According to Ndulue (2020), package colour, material, shape and size, and printed information on packaged products were found to have significant effect on consumer buying behaviour of beverage products in Anambra. Moreover, Ahmad and Kanwal (2021) conclude that colour, design, material, printed information on package and innovation have positive and significant impact on consumer buying behaviour for packaged foods in Pakistan.

Obinna and Horsfall (2016), argue that, the combinations of brand name, material, label, trade mark has a significant influence on consumer purchase of table water in Portharcourt, also, it is their opinion that the colour blend of blue and green be adopted for table water firms. Kesavan et al. (2020), argue that aesthetic appeal of product information, material, colour, shape and size positively influence the buying behaviour of consumers in Madurai. Shashikiran and Behl (2018), assert that, package colour, package creativity and material quality have highest and positive correlation with consumers’ purchase intention of soft drinks in Bangalore. In their study, Oaya, Newman and Ezie (2017), are able to show that there is a direct significant relationship between product differentiation, labelling and consumer awareness of a product in Nasarawa state. Farooq, Habib and Aslam (2015) also suggest that all four elements of package; design, graphics, colour and material have significant positive association with purchase intention.
Although there is a wide range of studies conducted on this particular issue, majority of the studies are product specific hence few have covered the FMCG sector in Nigeria (Maende, 2018). Also, imported FMCG products come with different packaging designs than those of local FMCG products. At the same time, the local FMCG products are on a cutthroat competition with those imported products more than with the local ones (Karedza & Sikwila, 2017). Since, the available literature on this research work do not provide unanimous answer concerning influence of package elements on consumer buying decision coupled with fact that only few studies have been conducted to determine influence of packaging on consumer buying decision in the FMCG sector in Nigeria, there is need to explore the interaction between product packaging and consumer choices with respect to FMCG product categories in Nigeria.

Based on the above, the aim of this study is to find out the impact of product packaging of FMCG on consumer buying decision and to also find out the impact of the various packaging elements on the consumer.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**The Concept of Packaging**

Packaging can be defined quite simply, as an extrinsic element of a product, an attribute that is related to the product but does not form part of the physical product itself (Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Musa, 2015). It is the container for a product encompassing the physical appearance of the container and it includes the design, colour, shape, label, and materials used (Arens, 1996; Musa 2015). It is used to identify, describe, protect, display as well as to promote the product and to make it readily marketable, storable as well as to protect it against damage. Packaging is the process of designing and producing the container or wrapper which stores, protects, identifies and promotes a product. It can include three types of packaging: primary, secondary, and distribution (shipping) package (Kotler 2002; Grundey, 2010).

Packaging forms an important part of the sales process. An appropriate packaging is able to play its role as a silent seller. Packaging now is not only a rapping of product that holds the information regarding product and the manufacturer of a product but also is the ultimate selling proposition stimulating impulsive buying behaviour, increasing market share and reducing promotional costs (Okeke & Amobi, 2020). Packaging is all material used for the containment, protection, hard delivery and presentation of goods. It is the container which is necessary to convey a product to the ultimate consumer.
Benefits of Product Packaging

Packaging is a very important aspect of product marketing strategy that helps to attract the consumers’ attention (Ndulue, 2020). Packaging plays an important role which includes protecting a product from any sort of damages, offering information about the brand, quality and how to use the product. Packaging can act as barrier to protect products from various deterioration and contamination and also from the air, dust, and sun rays which may be harmful to products (Sarpong, 2014). Apart from protecting the quality of its products on retail shelves or in consumers’ homes, packaging also helps to protect a product from the stresses inherent in the distribution system, allowing the product to reach its destination safely. Because of these hazards, packaging is designed to facilitate safe distribution of products (Sarpong, 2014). Therefore, packaging is one of the most important factors affecting consumer purchase decisions and plays an important role in marketing communications, especially at the point of sale (Ckukwu & Enudu, 2018; Okeke & Amobi, 2020).

Packaging plays an important functional role such as convenience, protection or storage. Another functional value of packaging is in extending storage and shelf life (the time a product can be stored before it spoils). Packaging has a significant role in influencing children’s decisions and colour is an important element in the choice of food Products for children to capture their look with bright colours, fun and exciting looks (Akbari, 2014). A product’s package can become yet another “salesperson” for the product once it is in stores. As a result, companies are trying to determine how to best use a product’s package to communicate with their customers in hopes that it will play a significant role in a consumer’s decision to buy their product. Musa (2015), also identifies the benefits of packaging to include physical protection, barrier protection, containment or agglomeration, information transmission, reducing theft, marketing and convenience.

Packaging is often used as a tool to extend shelf life by preventing or reducing water loss, especially in fresh products. Unpacked foods are often exposed to a range of microorganisms which have the potential to reduce shelf-life (Paine & Paine 1992; Opara & Mditshwa, 2013). In effect, the product package design acts as a brief commercial for the brand prior to purchase and in the latter stages, the package design affects consumers post purchase experiences. Conventional marketing thinking suggests that the primary goals of packaging include
identifying the brand, communicating information, facilitating distribution and logistics, preserving the product and assisting product consumption (Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun; Kotler & Keller 2012; Mutsikiwa & Marumbwa, 2013). Packaging works as a tool for differentiation, i.e. helps consumers to choose the product from wide range of similar products, stimulates customers buying behaviour (Underwood, Klein & Burke 2001; Silayoi & Speece 2004; Olawepo & Ibojo, 2015). Virginity of product is another function of packaging. Virginity of product implies that the product has never been used before. While purchasing a product, its package tells us that the product has never been used before or shows virginity of product (Khan & Ullah, 2014).

**Materials Used for Packaging**

Package material is any wrapper that protects a product. Various packaging materials have different properties suitable for specific products that may enhance shelf life and facilitate convenience while using in different use occasions (Maende, 2018). Several materials may be used as packaging structures. The commons ones, however, include paper, plastic, wood, metal, shrink wrap, fabric and glass, among others. Mention must be made here that these materials should be able to prevent spoilage, withstand stress and allow proper marketing (Hollins & Pugh, 1990; Sarpong, 2014). As most packaging generate waste, there is renewed focus on creating sustainable packaging and some of the examples of those materials are poly lactide acid (PLA) plastics, sugar cane pulp, fiber composite, starch-based films and so on (Maende, 2014). As a result of migration occurring between products and packages, especially foods directly consumed; required characteristics of packaging materials may change, loss of quality can occur in food ingredients or food material can be degraded. Therefore, migration is very important in food packaging and selection of appropriate packaging materials for foods and storage conditions should be considered (Icoz & Eker, 2016).

Plastic packaging has become very popular in Nigeria and is increasingly being preferred, especially in the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. Other examples include packaging for soft drinks, water, cosmetics and other beverages. There are several advantages of using plastics for food packaging. Plastics can be made into sheets, shapes, and structures, offering considerable design flexibility (Ramos et al. 2015). They are inexpensive, versatile and
lightweight with a wide range of physical and optical properties. The six types of plastic used for packaging, according to Damewood (2019), include PETE (Polyethylene Terephthalate), HDPE (High density Polyethylene), PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride), LDPE (Low density Polyethylene), PP (Polypropylene) and PS (Polystyrene).

Paper and paperboard is lightweight and economical compared to other packaging systems. It also account for one-third of the total packaging market (Kirwan, 2011). A wide range of paper and paperboard is used in packaging today—from light-weight infusible tissue for tea and coffee bags to heavy duty boards used in distribution. Paperboard is thicker than normal paper with a higher weight per unit area and often made in multiple layers, with a weight of more than 225gsm. It is commonly used to make containers for shipping—such as boxes, cartons, and trays—and seldom used for direct food contact (Sarpong, 2014). According to Ramos et al. (2015), some advantages of paper and paperboard packaging include lightweight and economical, compared to other packaging systems, recyclable, efficient, easy handling by consumers. Some of its disadvantages include poor barrier properties to light, moisture, not used to protect foods for long periods of time, when used as primary packaging, it is coated or laminated to improve functional and protective properties, and it also tears easily.

Metals can also be recycled countless times. It can be recovered, melted again and transformed into another product. Metal containers are unbreakable, withstand extreme temperature and pressure, and offer a complete barrier against light and oxygen. They can also be made light, which makes transportation easy. It provides easier and more convenient systems to open and close containers. Metal packaging has excellent barrier properties—100% protection from light, air and water-ensuring maximum product quality (Page, Edwards & May, 2011). The two metals most predominantly used in packaging are aluminum and steel. Some foods need to be kept in a dark environment; aluminum is good in this respect (Mahalik, 2014). Metal packaging is especially important for fresh food storage. Aluminum made into foil can be made into light, seamless cans for soft drinks. Tinplate is strong and can be used for canned drinks, processed foods and aerosol cans. Tin-free steel is strong and can be used for bottle caps and large drums for bulk-sale items.

**Consumer Behaviour**
Consumer behaviour is defined as the physical, mental and emotional activity which consumers engage in during selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of goods and services in order to satisfy their needs and their own desires (Samadi, 2003; Karimi, Mahdieh & Rahmani, 2013). It refers to the actions of the consumers in the market place and underlying motives for those actions. Consumer behaviour in general, is defined as: Consumer's final decision regarding the acquisition, use and dispose of goods, services, time and ideas from different parts of the decision in a period of time (Hoyer, 2001; Karimi, Mahdieh & Rahmani, 2013). The study of consumer behaviour therefore involves three behavioural processes which are Pre – purchase behaviour, Purchase behaviour and Post – purchase behaviour. By understanding how consumers decide on a product and what factors influences their decisions, marketers can fill the gap and identify which product is needed and which are obsolete in the market.

According to Rani (2014), Consumer buying behaviour is influenced by social, psychological, personal and cultural factors. The psychological orientations of consumers play a crucial role in their purchasing behaviour. Psychological factors can be divided into 4 categories: motivation, perception, learning as well as beliefs and attitudes (Rani, 2014). The social factor explains the outside influence of others on our purchase decisions. For any marketer, a social group consists of two or more people interacting with each other to accomplish personal or collective goals (Deekshitha, Kumar & Pradeep, 2017). It includes reference groups, family, roles and status. In a family for example, marketers are interested in the roles and influences of the husband, wife and children on the purchase of different products and services. Social class has been found to be especially useful in predicting preferences of kind, quality and style of clothing, home furnishings, leisure activities, cars, and consumer durables, patterns of media usage, language patterns and shopping behaviour (Durmaz, 2014).

The culture of the society within which consumers are contained can easily determine what their buying behaviour is and also should be thoroughly studied by the business that seeks to persuade them to buy its products or services (LaMarco, 2018). The isolated individual cultural values one picks up from travelling from one place to the other do not make up ones culture. Rather, what can be referred to as ones culture are the articulated cultural values that can be traced to a particular setting one belongs to (Okoye, 2020). The buying
behaviour of a person is also highly influenced by personal traits such as gender, age, life cycle, personality, self-esteem and life style (Deekshitha, Kumar & Pradeep, 2017). The age range of the buyer for example indicates the type of products he/she would like to have. Also, most of their decisions on what to buy would depend on how much they can afford. Every consumer is different, and each consumer views himself in a unique way. The way and manner that consumers view themselves, coupled with their personalities determine which products and services they prefer.

**Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)**

FMCGs normally bear a low price and are sold fast. They are characterized by low profit margins although cumulative profits might be high based on large quantities sold (Karedza & Sikwila, 2017). FMCG can be defined as an essential or non-essential good that is frequently purchased. Examples include soft drinks, food, toiletries, and disposable diapers amongst others (Ray, 2012; Odupitan, 2017). FMCGs are the largest segment of consumer goods; nearly everyone in the world uses fast moving consumer goods every day. From the perspective of consumers, FMCG is easily purchased, i.e. not much thinking/comparison between products is carried out before purchase, and low investment required for purchasing the items. From a retailer’s perspective, FMCG have low margins, high shelf turnover and high volume sales items. Because fast-moving consumer goods have such a high turnover rate, the market is not only very large, it is also very competitive. FMCGs are sold in large quantities, so they are considered a reliable source of revenue (Ehsan & Samreenlodhi, 2015). Most FMCGs are low involvement products. In low involvement, consumers do not search extensively for information about the brands, evaluate their characteristics, and make a weighty decision on which brand to buy. One reason for this is low risk (Chaudhuri, 2000; Mitchell, 1999; Silayoi & Speece, 2004).

**Review of Empirical Studies**

Ndulue (2020) studied product packaging and consumer buying behaviour of selected beverage products in Anambra state and was able to find out that Packaging colour, packaging material, package shape and size, and printed information on packaged products have significant effect on consumer buying behaviour of beverage products in Anambra state. Similar conclusion was also
obtained by Kesavan et al., (2020) who assessed the effect of packaging factors on consumers buying behaviour in FMCG products from urban areas of Madurai District and also concluded that product information, material, colour, shape and size are positively influenced the buying behavior of customers.

The findings of the study by Ahmad and Kanwal, (2021) on packaging elements and their impact on consumer buying behavior in Pakistan revealed that color, design, material, printed information on package and innovation have positive and significant impact on consumer buying behavior for packaged foods. Another study by Ashaduzzaman and Mahbub (2016) who examined the role of packaging elements on buying detergent powder in Dhaka city revealed that six components of packaging: Packing Colour, Background Image, Font Style, Wrapper Design, Printed Information, and Packing Innovation that have impacts on purchase decision of detergent powder in Dhaka City.

Okeke (2020) investigated the influence of packaging on consumer buying decision of cosmetics in Awka and discovered that printed information on packaging remains most significant predictor of consumer purchase decision for beauty care cosmetics followed by package material, then colour and finally, graphics on packaging. Similarly, Sunday and Joseph (2014) examined the effects of packaging on consumer choice of cosmetic products university of Calabar community. The result reveal that there is a significant relationship between the package colour and consumer choice of cosmetic products. There is a significant relationship between the labelling and consumer choice of cosmetic products. There is a significant relationship between the quality of the package materials and the consumer choice of cosmetic products.

A study by Javed and Javed (2015) on the impact of product’s packaging colour on customers’ buying preferences under time pressure concluded that colour of packaging plays a very important role in decision making by customers to purchase a good. In shops or markets, when consumers were supposed to do shopping quickly under time pressure, they were mostly influenced by attractive products’ colourful packaging that in turn could influence number of sales as well. Another empirical study by Shashikiran and Behl (2018) on the impact of packaging and labeling on the consumer purchase intention of soft drinks and the factors that contribute to the purchase intention shows that the dependent and independent variables have a positive correlation, with package colour having the highest correlation with purchase intention.

Kesavan et al., (2020) disclosed that aesthetic appeal of product information, material, colour, shape and size positively influence the buying behavior of
customers. Kosgei (2018) also examine packaging attributes and consumer buying behaviour of packaged foods in Kenya. The study find a statistically significant relationship between graphics colour, packaging size, shape, product information, packaging material and consumer’s buying behaviour. More so, this study found out that among all the attributes, package information has the most impact on purchase decisions of packaged foods.

Findings from the study Hamdar, Dana and Chawa (2018) on effects of product packaging on consumer shopping behaviour, the case of Lebanon and the result of their study indicate that design of packaging has a critical role to play in the consumption of products in Lebanon. Additionally, the results of the study reflected that packaging, especially, colour and wrapping design play a vital role in the decision buying process of the consumer. Their findings are similar to that obtained by Borishade, Favour, Oluseye and Prosper (2015), who assessed the impact of packaging on consumer purchase decision. The core findings from their result obtained revealed that consumers are attracted to buy the product because of its shape, colour and design of the product. It is concluded that, packaging plays a positive role in the consumer purchase decision.

**Theoretical Background**

**The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), made necessary by the original models limitations in dealing with behaviours over which people have incomplete volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen’s idea was to include perceived behavioural control in the theory. In this way, he extended TRA to better predict actual behaviour. The TPB is a theory used to predict and understand behaviours. It posits that behaviours are immediately determined by a combination of three factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. The basic theory states that one’s attitude toward the behaviour, the subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, all have interrelated structures that influence intention. The perceived behavioural control refers to the degree to which a person believes that he or she can perform a given behaviour. It involves the perception of the individuals own ability to perform the behaviour. The theory suggests that people are much more likely to intend to enact certain behaviours when they feel that they can enact them successfully.

Kosgei (2018) used the TRA and TPB model to investigate consumer buying behaviour of packaged products. As kosgei (2018) explains, since the study intends to look at the way product attributes affect the purchasing behaviour of
the consumer, it is important that we understand the relationship between purchasing behaviour of the consumers and their attitude. The model has attitude and behaviour as relevant and corresponding components. It therefore act as an important framework to analyze the consumer attitude towards the different elements of the product packaging.

For the purpose of this study, TPB is important because the perception or attitude the consumer develops about a product relate to the interpretation the consumer gives about the packaging elements. This therefore plays an important role in influencing the intention and consequently the buying decision-making of the consumer. There is a general belief that purchasing green products and disposing them in an environmentally-friendly way, consumers can contribute significantly to improve the quality of the environment (Abdul-muhmin, 2007; Peron, 2015). This belief can go a long way in influence the type of packaged products consumers buy. TPB has already been successfully applied to an environmental context. Kumar (2012) in applying the TPB approach to understand the purchasing behaviour for environmentally sustainable products discovered that environmental knowledge has a significant positive relationship between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention.

METHODOLOGY
The methodology used in carrying out the library research is historical based on qualitative research methods in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The nature and sources of data collection are secondary by the use of published and unpublished content and textual analysis from textbooks, magazines, newspapers, journals, internet, government official publications, etc.

CONCLUSION
Numerous researches have been carried out to determine the impact of packaging on consumer buying behaviour, and many elements of packaging characteristics that influences consumers’ perception have been established. The packaging elements represent a good means of marketing communications towards consumers. The study therefore reveal that packaging is an important aspect of product marketing strategy that helps to attract the consumers’ attention. Packaging has gradually shown its important role in serving consumer by providing information and delivering function. With its different functionality to ease and to communicate with consumers, there is no doubt about the increasingly important role of packaging as a strategic tool to attract consumer’s attention and their perception of the product quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings and conclusions made, this study recommends that marketers should consider packaging as a vital instrument in modern marketing activities. The study also recommends that marketing agencies should practice green marketing as consumers have become more vigilant on the impact products have on the environment especially on the packaging materials. Marketers should be able to position their products as environmentally friendly through recycling or reuse of the product packaging. Similarly, it is recommended that marketers should invest on research to understand the packaging attributes that their consumers would be more interested in so as to meet their preference. Organizations should concentrate their efforts on making the package of product very attractive in order attract the interest of their customers. They should ensure high product distinction between its products and that of competitors’ products so as to enhance consumer rating or evaluation of the product.

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